



PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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Three Georgia Residents Indicted for Laundering Proceeds from a Stolen Identity Refund Fraud Scheme

A federal grand jury sitting in Atlanta, Georgia, returned an indictment, which was unsealed today, against three residents of an Atlanta suburb for conspiracy to commit money laundering, money laundering, access device fraud, aggravated identity theft and structuring, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciralo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney John A. Horn of the Northern District of Georgia.

Anthony Alika, his wife, Sonia Alika and Rapheal Atebefia, residents of Austell, Georgia, conspired together to launder the proceeds from a stolen identity refund fraud scheme, according to allegations in the indictment. It is alleged that the defendants and others obtained means of identification of actual individuals, including their names and social security numbers and used this information to access the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) "Get Transcript" database. Anthony Alika, Atebefia and others are also alleged to have obtained prepaid debit cards from stores located in multiple states, registered the cards in the names of the stolen identities and then filed false income tax returns using the stolen identities and directed the IRS to deposit the tax refunds onto these cards. To conceal their fraud, Anthony Alika, Atebefia and others allegedly used the prepaid debit cards to purchase money orders, which Anthony Alika, Sonia Alika and Atebefia deposited into bank accounts and then structured cash withdrawals of the proceeds in order to prevent the bank from filing Currency Transaction Reports.

If convicted, the defendants face a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for each count of money laundering, 10 years in prison for each count of access device fraud, 10 years in prison for structuring more than \$100,000 or five years in prison for structuring less than \$100,000 and a mandatory sentence of two years in prison for aggravated identity theft, which will run consecutive to any other prison term they receive. They also face substantial monetary penalties, restitution and forfeiture.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciralo and U.S. Attorney Horn commended special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, who investigated the case and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler and Charles M. Edgar Jr. of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Shanya Dingle, who are prosecuting this case.

An indictment merely alleges that crimes have been committed. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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